

**CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR PROCESSING COMMUNICATION
PACKETS AND VALID DATA BYTES**

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[58] Method and apparatus for processing data packets within a communication system such as a synchronous optical network (SONET) detect an invalid byte and drop and shift bytes of data to address an invalid byte. A method according to one embodiment of the present invention, includes receiving a first data packet in the communication system. Thereafter, it is determined whether this packet ends with both a valid byte and an invalid byte of data. If both the valid and invalid bytes are present, the invalid byte is dropped and a valid byte from a succeeding data packet is concatenated with the valid byte of the first data packet, and byte shifting occurs in the succeeding data packet. Byte shifting continues until a second packet ending with an invalid byte is encountered. Skipping a clock cycle at the end of the second packet with the invalid byte results in packets with only valid data.

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